

Quality Assurance Project Plans – An Overview

(For water quality monitoring projects)

A Quality Assurance Project Plan, or QAPP, is a written document outlining the quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) procedures a monitoring project will use to ensure the data it collects and analyzes meets project requirements. By law, any U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-funded monitoring project must have an approved QAPP before it begins collecting samples. This requirement ensures that the data collected is of known and suitable quality and quantity.

To meet this requirement, DCR grants that contain water quality monitoring activities and that receive federal funding from the EPA's Section 319 Grant or the Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant, require a QAPP that is approved by DCR. The Project Sponsor must implement the approved QA/QC in performing environmental monitoring activities. **No water quality monitoring activities may be initiated or will expenses be paid until the QAPP has been approved by DCR.**

QAPP Development:

If an organization already has a QAPP approved by EPA, DCR or the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Project Sponsors need only provide a signed and approved copy of this QAPP to meet these requirements. For those projects that intend to follow a monitoring protocol established by another entity with a current and approved QAPP (e.g., Virginia Save Our Streams, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay), then this document should be referenced in the new project QAPP.

For those organizations who need to develop a QAPP, the EPA provides guidance on the 24 elements of a QAPP in the publication, *EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans* (EPA QA/R-5, March 2001). This publication is on the web, <http://www.epa.gov/quality/qs-docs/r5-final.pdf>. Although 24 elements comprise a QAPP, not all elements necessarily apply to all projects. Volunteer monitoring programs using test kits for physical or chemical parameters can also use the EPA publication, *The Volunteer Monitor's Guide to Quality Assurance Project Plans* as a reference in developing a QAPP. This *Guide* is on the web, <http://www.epa.gov/volunteer/qappcovr.htm>.

DCR provides a checklist for developing a QAPP as well as a generic QAPP Optional Form in Appendix C of this manual, which may be used in developing a QAPP for a DCR grant project.

QAPP Submission and Approval:

- 1) **Monitoring only projects:** For grants projects that are only for monitoring activities, the QAPP must be submitted to the DCR Project Manager with the scope of work and/or project proposal. The DCR grant manager will approve a QAPP before the Grant Agreement is effective.
- 2) **Monitoring sub-projects:** For grant projects where a monitoring project is part of a larger project, the QAPP should be submitted to DCR Project Manager within thirty (30) days of the effective date of the Grant Agreement.

Upon receiving the QAPP, the DCR Project Manager forwards a copy to the Grant Manager for review. Within thirty (30) days, the DCR Project Manager will be notified that the QAPP has been approved, conditionally approved, or not approved. A conditional approval will allow monitoring to begin even though some deficiencies were noted in the plan. The DCR Project Manager will receive written notification on the deficiencies found and they are responsible for forwarding this information to the Project Sponsor and verifying that a revised plan is submitted within thirty (30) days.